



# The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln

Petersen House – Photos and  
Illustrations

Excerpts from newspapers and other  
sources

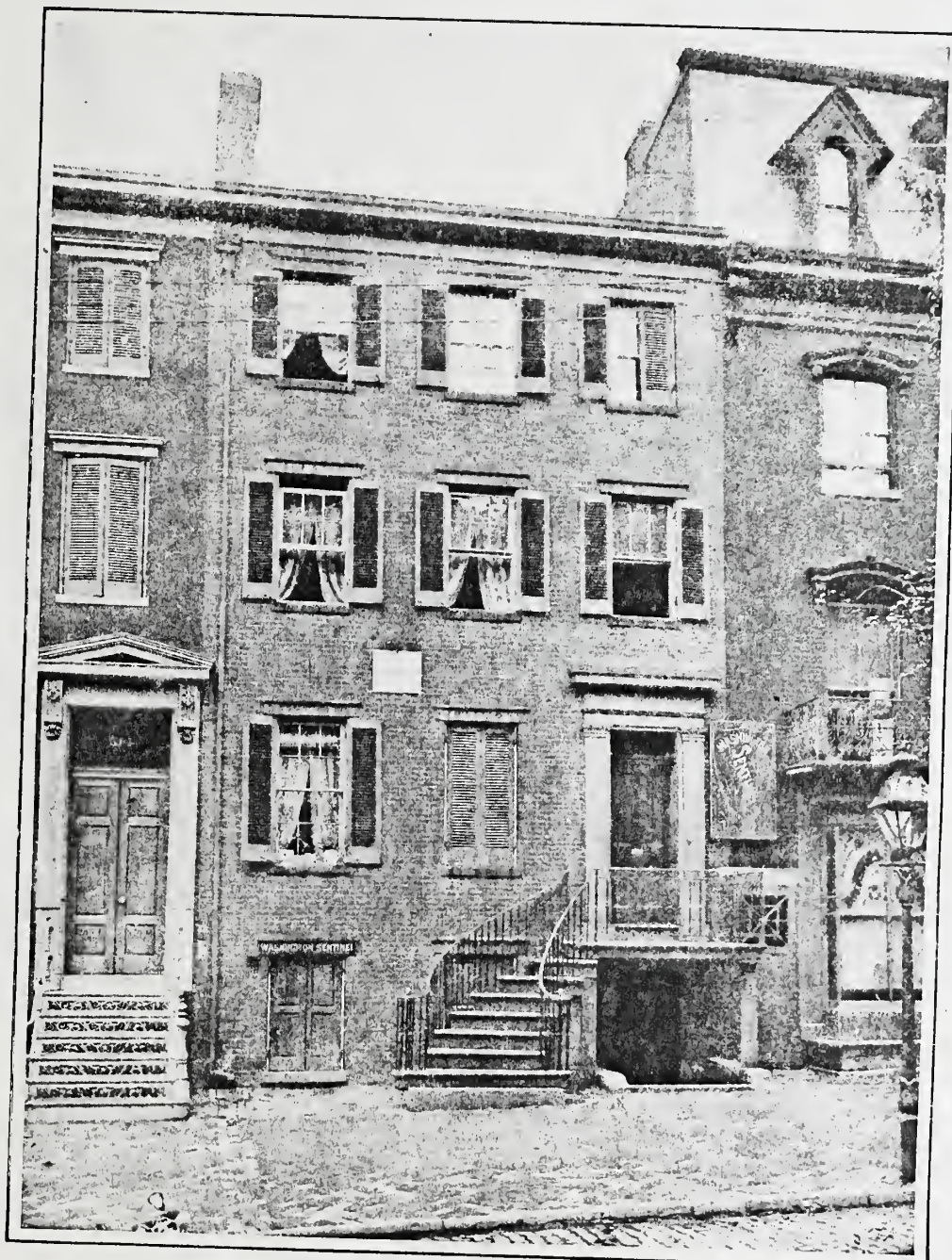
From the files of the  
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection



MURDER OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN—MR. LINCOLN CARRIED FROM THE THEATRE TO PETERSEN'S HOUSE, OPPOSITE, APRIL 14.

*Fisher May 15 1865*



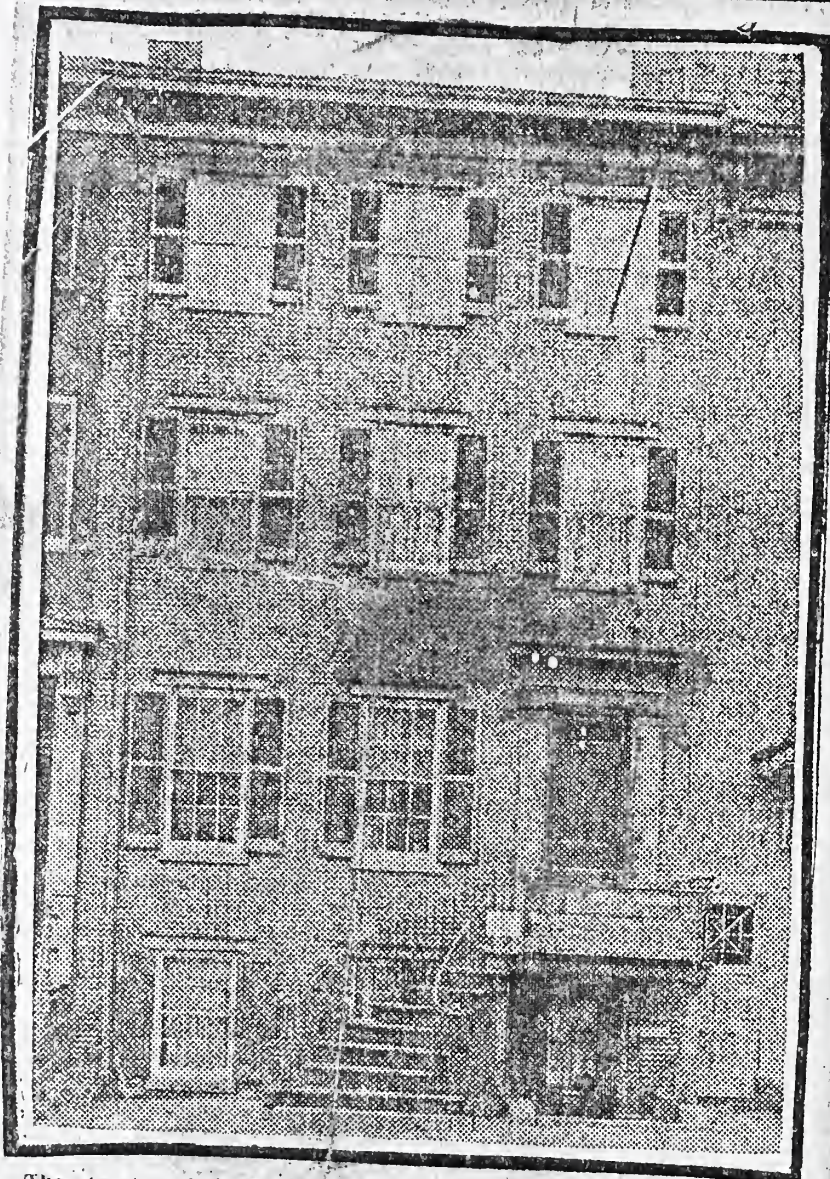


HOUSE IN WHICH PRESIDENT LINCOLN DIED ON SATURDAY MORNING APRIL 15, 1865

Photograph taken of the building opposite Ford's Theater in which Lincoln spent his last hours—The house is now the famous Lincoln Museum established by Mr. Osborn H. Oldroyd at Washington, D. C.  
Print in possession of Mr. L. C. Handy of Washington



## House Where Lincoln Died



The structure is located opposite Ford's theatre, in Washington, D. C.

The scenes surrounding the last hours of President Lincoln are familiar to every school boy. Immediately after the fatal shot was fired he was conveyed to a house opposite Ford's theater, where he expired the next morning, April 15, 1865.

This house today is filled with relics of historic interest connected with

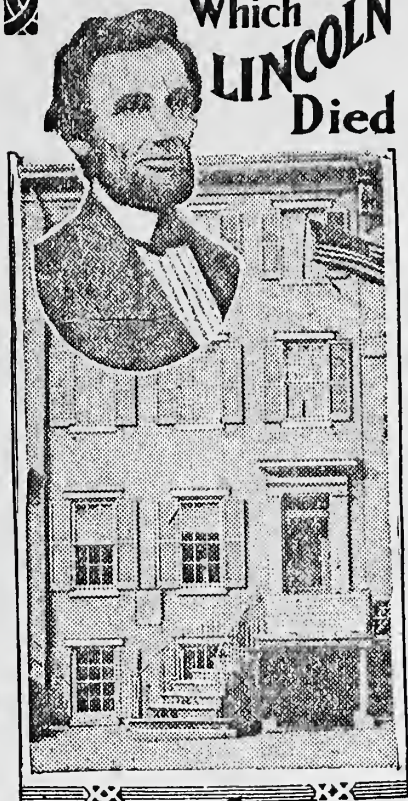
President Lincoln. The room in which the martyred president died is almost sacred ground. It affords one of the most interesting historic spots in Washington, and of the thousands of travelers who yearly come to the national capital few miss the opportunity of seeing the house where Abraham Lincoln died.

*Joliet Republican*  
2/11/09

1000000



# The House in Which LINCOLN Died



<sup>1876</sup>  
**T**HE house in which Abraham Lincoln died on the morning of April 15, 1865, stands opposite Ford's theater, in which the president was shot on the preceding night. The house, known sometimes as the Peterson house, from a former occupant, is now devoted to the exhibition of a wonderful collection of Lincoln relics owned by Osborn H. Oldroyd. Mr. Oldroyd has given his life since boyhood—he is now an elderly man—to the study of the life of Lincoln and the collection of objects connected with the life of the president. He has relics split by Abraham Lincoln, the Lincoln family Bible, etc.

THE LIN-  
COLN MU-  
SEUM—in the  
little house  
where Lin-  
coln died.





# LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor,  
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 523

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

April 17, 1939

## THE PETERSEN HOUSE

The house standing at 516, formerly numbered 453, Tenth Street Northwest in Washington has become one of the nation's most impressive shrines. Here Abraham Lincoln passed away in a room smaller than the cabin room in which he was born.

Immediately after the President was shot by the assassin Booth at Ford's Theatre on the night of April 14, 1865, Dr. Charles Taft examined the prostrate body of Lincoln and ordered it removed to the nearest bed. Dr. Taft states that in directing those carrying the body he observed upon reaching the street a man standing on the porch of a house just opposite the theatre. "To that house I directed my steps," he said, "and was pleased to find a neat bedroom at the end of the hall, without going upstairs. The single bed was pulled out from the corner of the room and the dying President laid upon it diagonally, his extreme length not admitting any other position."

The house to which the body of the unconscious Lincoln was taken was occupied by the family of Mr. W. Petersen, and the dwelling has since become known as the Petersen House. The building, a three-story brick with a "light" basement which virtually made it a four-story building, was under construction when Abraham Lincoln was in Congress in 1849.

Mr. Petersen evidently became offended because his home had been called a tenement house by some of the news reporters, and he had this impression corrected by Leslie's weekly which commended, "Mr. Petersen's house in which the President died is one of the most respectable houses in Washington and not a tenement house . . . It is one of the highest of its class."

There were several roomers in the house, however, and the room where the body of the President was taken was rented by William T. Clark. Four other men were inmates of the home as indicated by this interesting excerpt from Leslie's paper of April 29, 1865:

### "Artistic Accuracy

"We present to our readers below conclusive and unsolicited evidence of the accuracy of our engraving of the scene at the deathbed of President Lincoln:

Washington, D. C., 453 10th Street,  
Sunday, April 16, 1865.

"We, the undersigned, inmates of No. 453 10th street, Washington, D. C., the house in which President Abraham Lincoln died, and being present at the time of his death, do hereby certify that the sketches taken by Mr. Albert Berghaus, Artist for *Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, are correct.

HENRY ULKE,  
JULIUS ULKE,  
W. PETERSEN,

THOS. PROCTOR,  
WM. T. CLARK,  
H. S. SAFFORD."

To the artist Berghaus we are indebted for a minute description of the death chamber:

"The room in which the President died is in the rear part of the building, and at the end of the main hall, from which rises a stairway. The walls are covered with a brownish paper, figured with a white design. Its dimen-

sions are about ten by fifteen feet. Some engravings and a photograph hang upon the walls. The engravings were copies of the 'Village Blacksmith,' and Herring's 'Stable and Barnyard Scenes.' The photograph was one taken from an engraved copy of Rosa Bonheur's 'Horse Fair.' The only furniture in the room was a bureau covered with crochet, a table, eight or nine plain chairs, and the bed upon which Mr. Lincoln lay when his spirit took its flight. The bedstead was a low walnut, with headboard from two to three feet high. The floor was carpeted with Brussels, considerably worn. Everything on the bed was stained with the blood of the Chief Magistrate of the nation."

One wonders why a much larger bedroom just in back of the parlor was not used in preference to the hall bedroom as it contained a bed, but Dr. Taft's comment and a citation by Mr. Oldroyd may answer the question. Apparently the bed in the large room was not made up, while Dr. Taft refers to Clark's room as "a neat bedroom."

A letter which William Clark wrote to his sister Ida four days after the assassination has been preserved and reveals some interesting side lights on this last host to the martyred President:

"Dear Sister Ida:

"Today the funeral of Mr. Lincoln takes place . . . Hundreds daily call at the house to gain admission to my room. I was engaged nearly all Sunday with one of Frank Leslie's special artists, aiding him in making a complete drawing of the last moments of Mr. Lincoln, as I know the position of everyone present. He succeeded in executing a fine sketch, which will appear in their paper. He wished to mention the names of all pictures in the room, particularly the photograph of yourself, Clara, and Nannie; but I told him he must not do that, as they were members of my family, and I did not wish them to be made so public. He also urged me to give him my picture, or at least allow him to take my sketch, but I could not see that either. Everybody has a great desire to obtain some memento from my room, so that whoever comes in has to be closely watched for fear they will steal something. I have a lock of Mr. Lincoln's hair, which I have had neatly framed; also a piece of linen with a portion of his brain. The pillow and case upon which he lay when he died, and nearly all his wearing apparel, I intend to send to Robert Lincoln as soon as the funeral is over as I consider him the most justly entitled to them. The same mattress is on my bed, and the

same coverlid covers me nightly that covered him while dying . . .

"Your affec. brother,  
"Willie."

Sixteen years later the house was in possession of Louis Schade, and the room in which Lincoln died became the playroom for Mr. Schade's children. The memorial association of the District of Columbia leased the house and it was opened as a museum on October 17, 1893. It is now the property of the government and its restoration has been directed so as to create the surroundings as they appeared on the night of Lincoln's death.

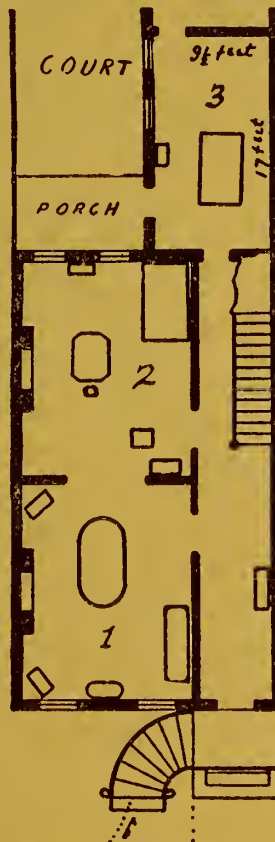


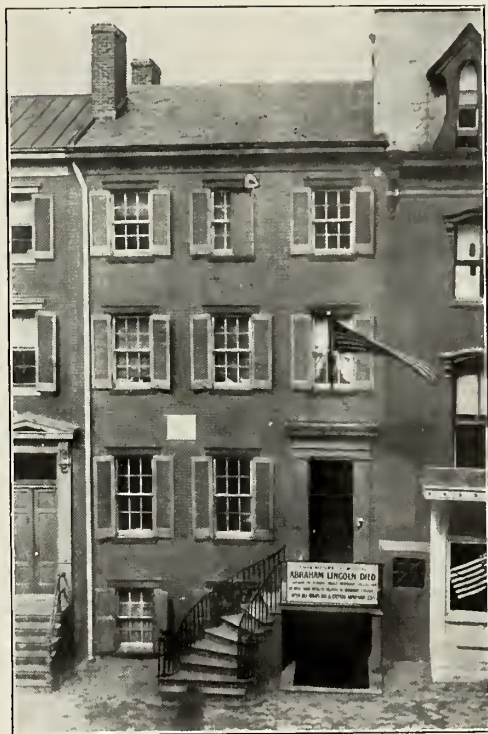
DIAGRAM OF THAT PART OF  
HOUSE UTILIZED ON FATAL  
NIGHT.

1. Front parlor occupied by Mrs. Lincoln.
2. Back parlor occupied by Secretary Stanton for the preliminary examination of witnesses.
3. Hall bedroom in which the President died.



OLDROYD





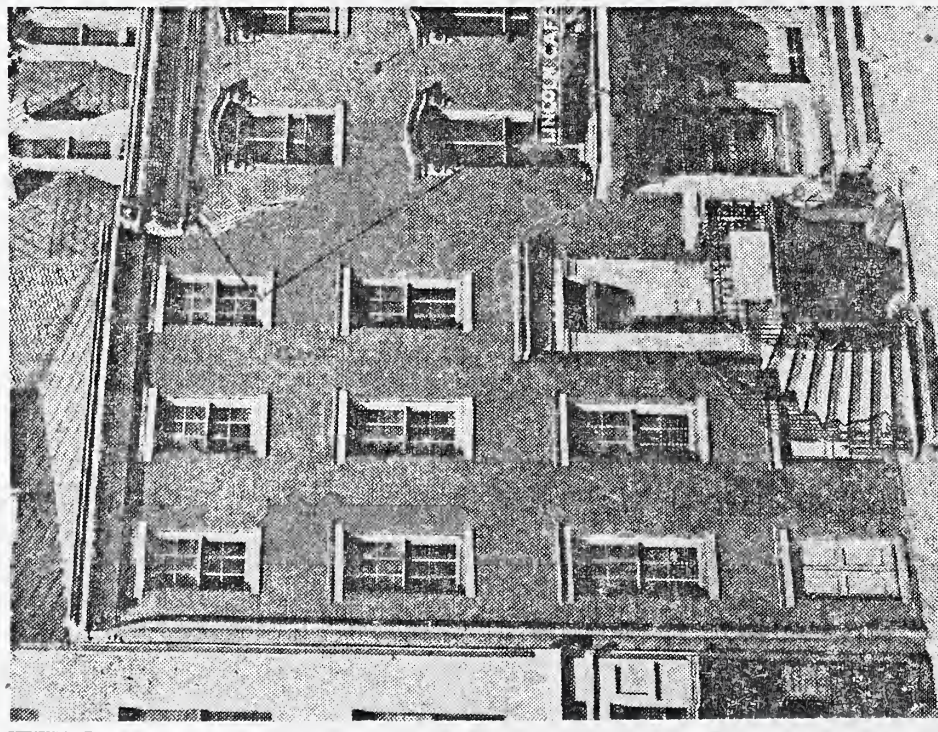
HOUSE WHERE PRESIDENT LINCOLN DIED.

*Lincoln 4th*  
*Lincoln*  
*p. 110*

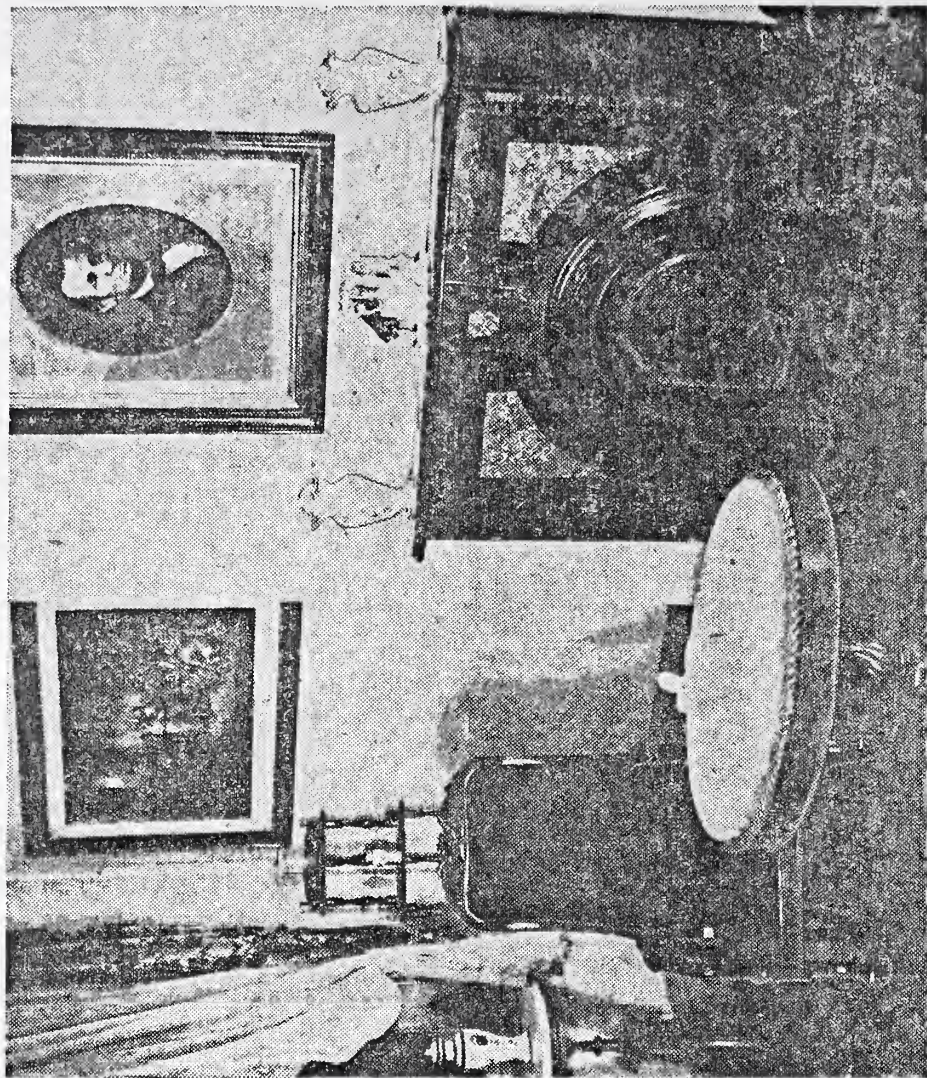


Oregon Journal 2-12-52

# WASHINGTON HOUSE FILLED GREAT MISSION IN HISTORY OF UNITED STATES



UP THIS iron-railed stairway dying Abraham Lincoln was carried April 14, 1865. House stands today just as it was then. Cafe and cocktail bar next door, capitalize on great man's name.



IN THIS front parlor of William Petersen home, Mary Todd Lincoln sat out horrible night before her husband's death. Some of Lincoln's own furniture, as horsehair sofa and rocking chair from his Springfield home, are in this room today. Home was purchased by U. S. government.



By LILLIAN PORTER SAY  
Journal's Washington Correspondent

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12.—On one of Washington's busiest thoroughfares is a little house.

Thousands of visitors pass through it yearly. Almost without exception they lower their voices and step lightly over its worn floors as if some untoward noise may awaken a sleeper within or disturb one mortally ill.

There was a light in the hallway of this row house on the evening of April 14, 1865. It was approximately 10:45 p. m., a half hour after John Wilkes Booth had fired the fatal shot in the old Ford theatre directly across the street.

Those who bore in their arms the dying Abraham Lincoln saw this light and decided to carry the suffering president to that nearby refuge. It would be needlessly cruel and unwise to put him in a carriage and jounce him over the cobblestones to the White House.

They went slowly up the outside steps of that small house and walked along the narrow hall past the hat rack to the nearest bedroom. Because of his great height, they laid the president diagonally on the bed. It was the room of a soldier, William T. Clark of Co. D, 13th Massachusetts infantry, who was detailed to duty with the war department.

During the long hours of the night cabinet members, congressmen and other distinguished persons passed silently to and from the room.

No doubt, in the long vigil every line of the president's face was sharply etched before them. No doubt, they found their eyes all unwittingly studying the details of that room. A copy of the "Village Blacksmith" hung on the wall near the wash stand and above the bed was one of Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair."

\* \* \*

IN THE FRONT parlor sat Mary Todd Lincoln. Leaning heavily on friends, she had followed the sad procession across the street. Now and then she went into the room where the president lay and cast herself down beside him. Each time she saw her husband her anguish increased. Finally she fell in a prolonged faint and was not permitted to enter the room again.

During the night while the president lay dying in the austere little bedroom, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton sat at a marble topped table in the back parlor interviewing witnesses of the shooting of the president. As Mr. Stanton talked, Cpl. James Tanner took notes in shorthand.

At 7:22 a. m., April 15, the president quietly breathed his last. The Rev. Phineas D. Gurley, pastor of the New York avenue Presbyterian church, knelt in prayer. Secretary of War Stanton uttered: "Now he belongs to the ages."

This little, tragic house had fin-

## Writer Visits Home Where Lincoln Died

ished its greatest mission. The commonplace enveloped it again. With this difference, it could no longer be just the home of William Petersen, a Swedish tailor, and his wife, Anna. It was the house in which Abraham Lincoln died.

\* \* \*

THE PETERSENS had built the house in 1849. Mr. Petersen had a tailor shop in the front room of the basement. It was Anna who cared for the roomers.

On November 25, 1876, the Petersen heirs sold the property to Mr. and Mrs. Louis Schade. Schade wanted the house not only for a home, but for an office for the paper he edited, The Washington Sentinel. For many years he published his paper here. His children played in the room where Mr. Lincoln died.

But although there was the activity of a business and the normal life of a family in the house, it was marked. The Schades were besieged by tourists who wanted to review that historic room.

Finally, the residents could bear it no more. They rented the house and moved away. From 1880, Congress made efforts to memorialize the house. In 1883, a tablet was placed on the outside of the building telling its story, and in 1896 the United States government purchased the house.

\* \* \*

INSIDE and out the house has remained practically the same since Mr. Lincoln's death. Furniture is of the exact period of the day and placed as it was on the night of April 14 and the morning of April 15, 1865.

Some of Lincoln's own furni-

ture is in the front parlor where Mary Todd Lincoln sat. There is a horsehair sofa and a high-back rocking chair from their home in Springfield. In the room in which Lincoln died copies of the same prints are hung on the walls.

The paper with its broad, dull green stripe is a reproduction of the original pattern. The bed and chairs are similar to those in the room on that April night. The gas lamps have been replaced by electricity but the fixtures are the same.

\* \* \*

CLOSE the front door behind you and the modern world engulfs you. Heavy motor traffic whizzes by on what was once a cobblestone street over which horse drawn vehicles moved.

At one side of this tragic house is one equally old but it has been remodeled and named the Lincoln cafe. It is air-conditioned. What a contrast to that little house that was heated by fireplaces in winter and was unbearable during humid Washington summers!

At the other side of the Petersen house is a modern furniture store. Its brightly upholstered davenports and chairs have no kinship with the dark wood and slippery horse hair furniture of its neighbor.

But above the noise of our day—the sound of traffic, radio and television, a strain from that little house makes itself hear. It sings of "malice toward none"; of "faith that right makes might."

Continued on Page 2, Column 1



# Weekender

THE WASHINGTON STAR

WASHINGTON, D. C., SATURDAY, APRIL 15, 1972



## Lincoln . . .

. . . died 107 years ago in the home of William Petersen (above), across from Ford's Theater.

## In TEEN . . .

. . . 5 roving leaders tackle Fairfax youths' problems where they're at. See Page 7.

## Segraves . . .

. . . says "Mr. Henry" plans to open a club with Roberta Flack as the star. See Page 16.

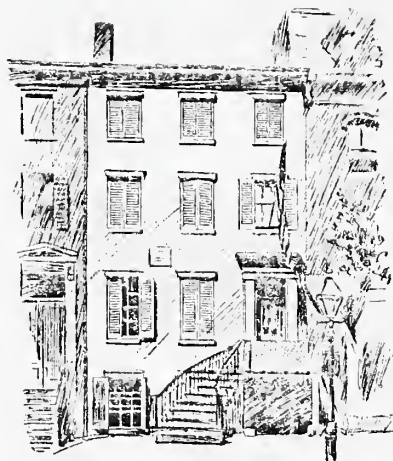




House Where Lincoln Died.

The old-fashioned wooden "settee" upon the platform stood for years upon the wide porch of the Lincoln home in Springfield, and was the favorite lounging place of Lincoln when he had time to rest his tired body in the long Summer evenings. The quaint old wooden chair, occupied by the presiding officer, was the one which Lincoln used continually in his law office. The little table was part of the furniture of the parlor in the Lincoln home, and the vases stood upon the mantel.

All these, with the large portrait, are the property of Capt. Osborn H. Oldroyd, late of the 20th Ohio, who for 50 years has been collecting Lincoln mementoes. For years he had his museum in the Lincoln home in Springfield, and now has his collection, which is of magnificent proportions and inestimable value, in the house opposite Ford's Theatre, 519 Tenth street N. W., in which Lincoln died. On Lincoln's birthday the house is thrown open to the public, and thousands view the collection, school children being particularly interested.



HOUSE IN WHICH LINCOLN DIED, WASHINGTON, D. C.

OLD 20 7 D





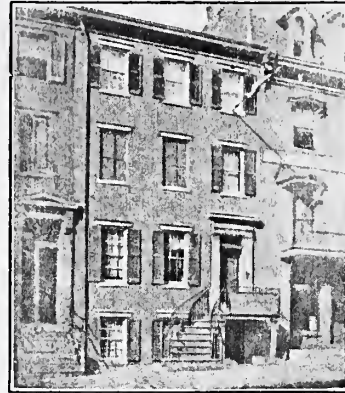
THE HOUSE (opposite) WHERE MR. LINCOLN DIED.

# Lincoln Museum

*Situated at No. 516 Tenth St. Open from 9:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. daily*

WHEN Lincoln fell the victim of an assassin's bullet, he was hurriedly carried to a plain little house nearby at No. 516 Tenth Street. This building was afterward thoroughly renovated and made a Museum Lincolnia, so to speak. It contains the famous Oldroyd Memorial Collection, consisting of more than three thousand articles pertaining to the martyred President. Among these are the family Bible; a rail split by Lincoln in 1830; the office chair he occupied at his desk in Springfield when drafting his first inaugural address and forming his cabinet; the furniture of his home at Springfield, Illinois; the last bit of writing that Lincoln ever did; also the spur which Booth wore and which he accidentally caught in the flag when leaping from the box in the theatre after the assassination of the President.

In order to defray the expenses of



© Harris & Ewing

THE HOUSE IN WHICH LINCOLN DIED

maintaining the house, a charge of 25 cents is made for admission . . . with reduced rates for large parties. Immediately opposite the Museum is Ford's Theatre, in which President Lincoln was shot.



MEMENTOES OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN THE LINCOLN MUSEUM



BY HAROLD HOLZER

&

FRANK J. WILLIAMS

# lincoln's RUBBER room

*Eager to produce unique and popular images of Abraham Lincoln's death, artists stretched the scene to suit their needs.*

**I**n the first chaotic minutes following the shooting of President Abraham Lincoln in Ford's Theater on April 14, 1865, young Henry Safford, a tenant in William Petersen's house across the street, heard noises outside and shouted from his window, "What's the matter?"

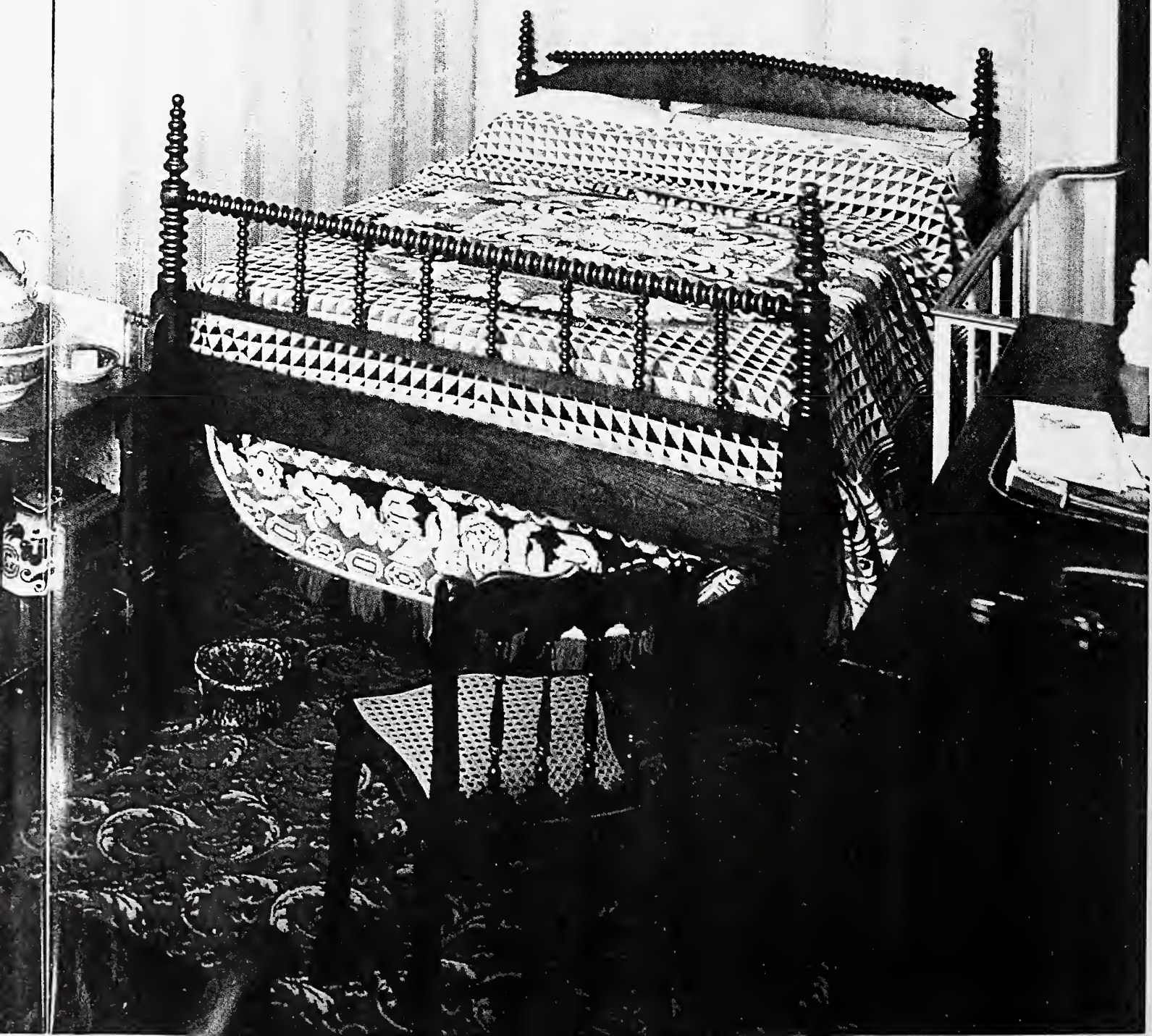
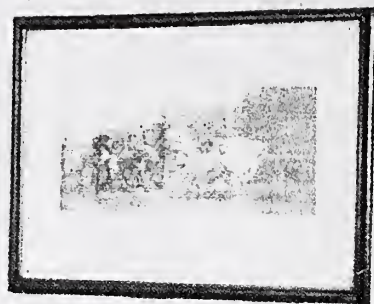
"The president has been shot," came the answer. Another voice asked, "Where shall we take him?"

Safford went to the front door and cried, "Bring him in here." He watched as the men bearing Lincoln's limp body struggled up the steps. Safford led the way inside to a small bedroom, 9½-by-17 feet, at the back of the first floor hall, a room unoccupied at the moment by its tenant, a soldier on leave named

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE









William T. Clark. Lincoln's long, 6'4" frame required that he be laid diagonally on the bed. His head was propped up so he could breathe more easily, and his feet protruded from beneath the covers.

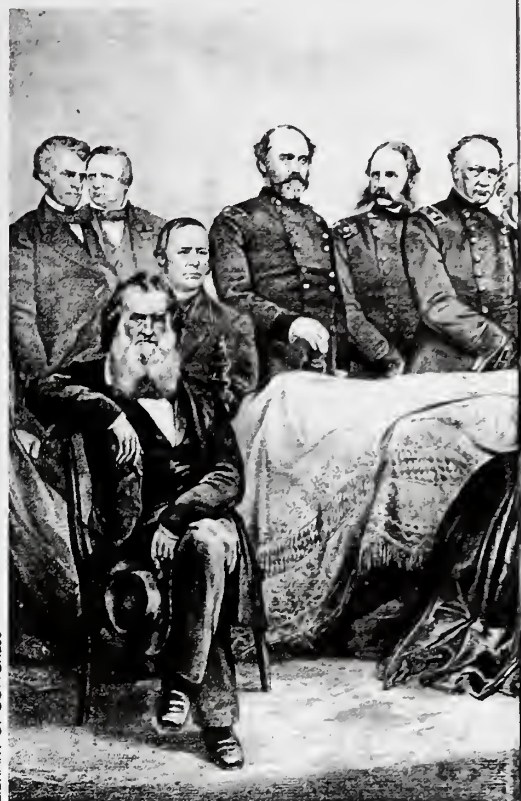
The president's wife, Mary, came into the room several times during the night, at one point throwing herself on the bed beside her stricken husband. Robert Lincoln, their eldest son, stood by his father's side or tried to soothe his mother while Senator Charles Sumner, in turn, comforted Robert. Secretary of War Edwin Stanton took charge of the scene and directed the search for the president's assailant. Approximately 55 individuals visited the dying president's bedside during the long night, though at no point were they all present at the same time as artists later suggested. Lincoln lingered in the cramped room for almost nine excruciating hours before drawing his last breath at 7:22 the following morning, Saturday, April 15, 1865. Stanton, who had once dismissed the president but had then grown to greatly admire him, said simply, "Now he belongs to the ages."

SUBSEQUENT ARTISTIC REPRESENTATIONS of the death room soon came to portray far more than simply the president's pass-

searched, skillfully crafted, or free of commercial motivation. Few, in fact, could claim such status. The somber death scene instead offered a transcendent opportunity to preserve a defining historical moment.

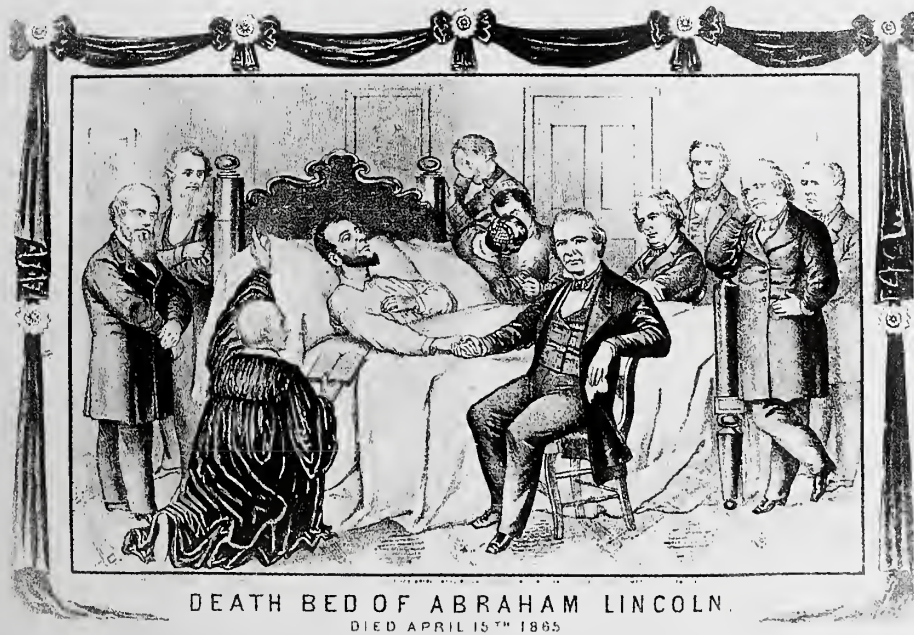
Lincoln's path to virtual sainthood was further assured because he was assassinated on Good Friday, dying suddenly and violently rather than at home in bed. Printmakers seemed to believe that the public preferred its leaders to die in places worthy of their exalted positions, and this perception encouraged them to enhance and embellish the place where Lincoln expired. Most printers proved unaware of or unwilling to accept the modest size of the death chamber itself, giving rise in popular art to what assassination expert Lesley A. Leonard has aptly called the "rubber room" phenomenon.

Artist Albert Berghaus later described the room where Lincoln died: "The walls are covered with a brownish paper, figured with a white design. Its dimensions are about ten by fifteen feet. Some engravings and a photograph hang upon the walls . . . The only furniture in the room was a bureau covered with crochet, a table, eight or nine plain chairs, and the bed upon which Mr. Lin-



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

*Previous page: A modern photograph shows the small size of the bedroom where Abraham Lincoln died. Above: C.A. Asp's engraving of Lincoln's death was cold and precise. Right: E.B. and E.C. Kellogg's version contained some odd errors. Left: Perhaps the strangest of all the deathbed images was J.L. Magee's lithograph, in which Robert Lincoln and his mother appear to be kissing.*



FRANK AND VIRGINIA WILLIAMS COLLECTION

ing. These seemingly primitive depictions of Lincoln's final moments are often dismissed by modern observers, yet in their own day they assumed the status of near-holy relics. That is not to say that they were all dependably re-

coln lay when his spirit took its flight. The bedstead was a low walnut, with headboard from two to three feet high. The floor was carpeted with Brussels, considerably worn. Everything on the bed was stained with . . . blood."

In successive prints, the modest Petersen house bedroom grew larger and larger to accommodate the number of people that publishers wanted portrayed in it and the artists' evident desire to aggrandize the circumstances surrounding a great man's death. They ignored, in large part, the possibility that people recognized and appreciated the symmetry and humility consistent with greatness in a president who was born in a log cabin and who died in a simple boarding house.

IT WAS THE LITHOGRAPHIC firm of Currier and Ives that set the pace, if not the standard, for the sudden torrent of Lincoln images with a print copyrighted on April 26, 1865. Ordinarily it took at least three weeks to complete a Civil War-era print. First an artist sketched a scene on paper, then produced a lithograph on





stone. Once drawn, Currier and Ives prints were hand colored, with a separate artist assigned to apply each tint. The prints were then placed on a clothes line to dry. That Currier and Ives managed to produce Lincoln assassination and deathbed scenes in less than two weeks indicates both the public's keen interest and the printmakers' marketing skills.

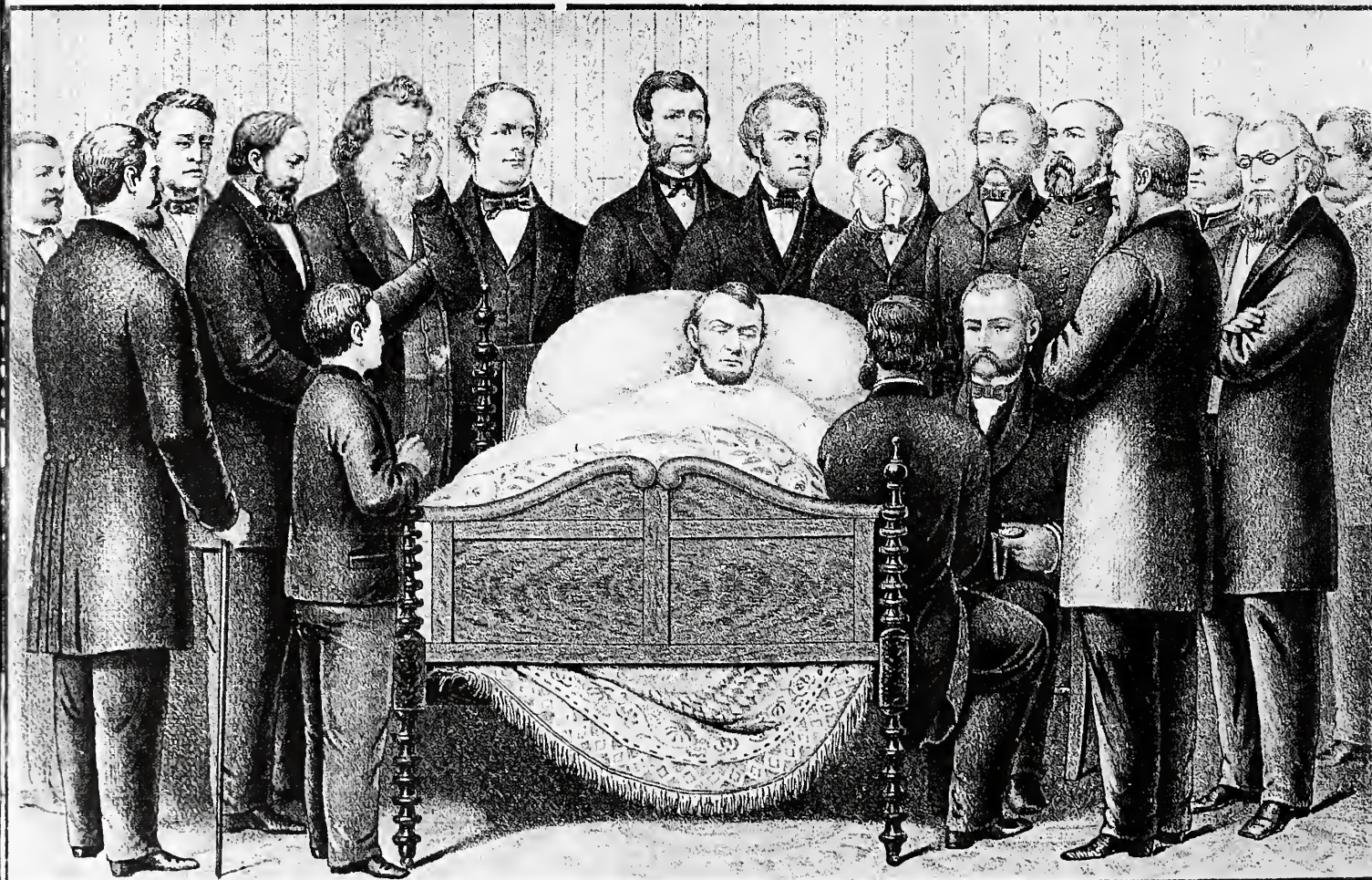
Like most of the prints that soon flooded the marketplace, their *Death of President Lincoln* showed a sterilized Lincoln without a trace of blood, pain, or discomfort. Lincoln's helpless surgeons were typically depicted sitting stoically by his bedside rather than removing blood clots from his wound and keeping him warm as they actually had been doing.

Mary Lincoln was not portrayed in the hysterical frenzy that overtook her that night. Instead, Currier and Ives usually presented her as a calm, resolute woman moving almost gracefully

through the event, dressed as if ready for an inaugural ball.

Currier and Ives' depiction contained its share of errors, such as the insertion of young Tad Lincoln crying on his mother's lap. Tad was in fact never brought to his father's bedside that night, even though Mary more than once expressed the irrational belief that her husband would awake if only he could hear Tad speak. What is surprising is how many details the artist portrayed correctly, particularly the print on the wall next to the bed. Many print-makers knew that the engraving of *The Village Blacksmith* hung in Lincoln's death room and took pains to include it in their scenes.

Currier and Ives was first, fast, and fairly accurate, but not yet satisfied. Within days the firm had second thoughts about one major omission from its original release—the new president, Andrew Johnson, who had made a brief appearance during the vigil. In



**DEATH OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.**  
April 15<sup>th</sup> 1865.





their second version Currier and Ives replaced General Henry W. Halleck with the man who succeeded Lincoln. With Johnson's inclusion, the print offered an image of the first moments of President Johnson's administration, symbolizing peaceful succession and national continuity in the face of crisis.

In their third and final version, Currier and Ives moved Johnson even closer to the bedside. Mary Lincoln, on the other hand, was banished to the doorway, weeping alone as her husband expired. To demonstrate a final farewell and reconciliation by Lincoln's political enemies, the scene now included the recently appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Salmon P. Chase, who in reality never appeared at the Petersen house.

Most printmakers preferred to keep Mary Lincoln in their portraits. Currier and Ives' New York neighbor, engraver H. H. Lloyd, exercised considerable artistic latitude in yet another derivative work by showing Mary sprawled across the bed, Tad kneeling in prayer, and Edwin Stanton nearly squashed by fellow witnesses.

The deception and the fantasy were only beginning, though there were some exceptions to the rule of publish first and research later. One "last moments" scene, for example, actually showed

blood on the pillow and the attending doctor realistically checking the dying man for a pulse. A surprisingly accurate German-made print featured a spool bed much like the one in which Lincoln died. Another German print by Gustave May of Frankfurt, after an original by J. H. Bufford of Boston, managed to convey the impression of the dying moment with considerable power, marred only by Andrew Johnson's pose of casual indifference.

Closer to home, lithographers E.B. and E.C. Kellogg of Hartford, Connecticut, produced a print with a unique, head-on perspective. It was as original as their rear-view companion print of the assassination, but was marked by bizarre errors like the inclusion of a Tad-sized figure depicted as "Young Petersen," as if the boarding house owner's son actually would have been allowed into President Lincoln's death chamber.

Some prints erred on the side of grandeur, such as the eerily photographic engraving by C.A. Asp of Washington. This work suffered from rigidity of pose and imprecision of background, yet the artist's skill made the overall effect perhaps too realistic for comfort. Its rarity may suggest that it was unpopular in its day.

Other prints remained shackled to the apparent necessity of including Lin-

*Top left: Max Rosenthal's majestic print added a divine element to the scene with the inclusion of angels coming to spirit Lincoln away to join George Washington in heaven. Above: The third and final Currier and Ives print of Lincoln's final moments showed Mary Lincoln weeping outside the room. Right: Alexander Hay Ritchie's lavish Death of Lincoln stretched the death room to outlandish proportions to accommodate its 26 occupants. In reality, the tiny chamber could have held no more than six or seven people.*

coln's successor. J.L. Magee's deathbed lithograph actually pictured Johnson holding Lincoln's hand as the attending pastor delivered a final blessing. The clergyman shown is not the Reverend Phineas D. Gurley who was, in fact, present. Meanwhile, Mary Lincoln was so awkwardly positioned that she appeared to be kissing her son Robert. The absent Chase was included as well.

Washington photographer Alexander





Gardner copyrighted his own composite scene, which did include Reverend Gurley. Twice during the night, Gurley had said prayers over kneeling visitors. But in Gardner's eerily realistic photo montage, the pastor's stoic presence appears to lack the kindness needed to prevent Mary and Robert Lincoln from dissolving into tears, the latter on the shoulder of Senator Charles Sumner.

Prints ranged from the ridiculous to the sublime and fanciful. Max Rosenthal of Philadelphia produced a colorful image remarkable not so much for the portraiture of the eyewitnesses but for the inclusion of angels sent to fetch the nation's newest martyr to heaven—pictured at the top of clouds, already occupied by George Washington.

Perhaps the most lavish and skillfully marketed of all the deathbed scenes, even if not the most accurate, was the work of Alexander Hay Ritchie. Ritchie was the printmaker who had engraved artist Francis B. Carpenter's famous painting of the first reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, one of the best-selling Lincoln prints ever.

Ritchie took two years to produce a painting entitled *Death of Lincoln*, which he then engraved for release in 1868. Although he claimed to have personally visited the Petersen house to make sketches, Ritchie nonetheless depicted

THE GRANGER COLLECTION

print  
e with the  
Lincoln  
n heaven.  
and Ives  
owed  
room.  
sh Death  
n to out-  
te its 26  
ber could  
n people.

deathbed  
Johnson  
attending  
ing. The  
Reverend  
fact, pre-  
n was so  
appeared  
e absent  
Alexander

THE GRANGER COLLECTION





no fewer than 26 recognizable onlookers (identified in a separately published key) in a room that could not have accommodated more than six or seven at once. Here the small room took on the grand proportions of a royal chamber, and with it, Lincoln's final moments assumed the trappings of the death of a king. At the same time, Ritchie was scrupulous enough to exclude both Vice President Johnson and Mrs. Lincoln.

Ritchie advertised heavily, probably because he published two years after his rivals did. His engraving was not only large—nearly two feet by three feet—but also expensive: \$20 for plain proofs and \$30 for signed artist's proofs, a hefty sum in post-Civil War America.

Ritchie believed the result to be worth

its cost. He boasted that the print offered not only portraiture of "striking character and individuality," but a priceless "record of the passing history of the nation." The subjects of the painting agreed. Reverend Gurley, for one, raved: "It renews my eye and heart with surprising vividness the scenes and impressions of that sadly memorable morning." It was, Gurley said, "a work of surpassing merit." Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, another visitor to the deathbed that night, expressed his hope "that the engraving may well have a place in thousands of American homes."

Judging by its rarity today, however, Meigs' and Ritchie's hopes went unfulfilled. Recently a cache of mint-condition, unsold signed artist's proofs of the

work was unearthed at Brown University's John Hay Library, apparently unseen for more than a century. Perhaps the print's large size and even larger price ruined its chances for success. It may also have simply arrived on the market too late.

Ritchie, however, wasn't alone in pictorial hyperbole. John H. Littlefield's 1866 vision of the death room included 25 people seated or standing around Lincoln's bedside, without any evidence of crowding in what would have been a chokingly claustrophobic atmosphere.

Also at Brown University is Alonzo Chappel's huge canvas, *The Last Hours of Lincoln*. This oil painting further expanded the small Petersen house room to hold a staggering 47 mourners, all of







Left: With the appearance of Alonzo Chappel's monumental oil painting *The Last Hours of Lincoln* in 1868, the evolution of "the rubber room" was complete. In this elaborately, though impossibly, designed picture, no less than 47 people look on as President Lincoln quietly expires. Chappel's lavish portraiture nearly overshadowed the presence of the dying president. The artist based his work on photographs he had previously taken of his subjects, including (above, left to right) Andrew Johnson, Robert Lincoln, Hugh McCulloch, and Edwin Stanton.

whom actually were there at one time or another during the night, but never together. Widely exhibited and lavishly praised, Chappel's work boasted perhaps the most realistic portraiture of any of the deathbed scenes, an affect the painter achieved by convincing the principals he intended to portray to pose for photographs in the precise position they would assume in his canvas.

Notwithstanding his notorious penchant for privacy, Robert Lincoln was convinced to pose for one such photograph, head bowed, and clutching a handkerchief as if in tears. President Johnson also stood for Chappel (although the artist ultimately chose to show him sitting in the painting), as did former Lincoln cabinet members Hugh McCulloch and Edwin Stanton. Jonathan Batchelder—famous for his exhaustively researched Gettysburg print panoramas—designed the arrangement of the figures for the final

*continued on page 61*



## LINCOLN'S RUBBER ROOM

*continued from page 47*

painting, which was no less complex than one of his battle scenes.

Soon after he unveiled the painting, Chappel distributed an order book to subscribers, promising that "a First Class, Steel Engraving, from this beautiful painting is about to be published," at a size of 31 by 17 inches. He also offered artist's proofs at \$100, India proofs at \$60, plain proofs at \$35, and plain prints at \$15—healthy prices indeed for the 1860s. Nevertheless, there was no shortage of subscribers for this work. Robert Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant each ordered the most expensive proof available.

There is no evidence, however, that any prints of Chappel's elaborate painting ever reached the marketplace. The only known adaptation of it, a rather clumsy lithograph by one M. David of New York, did not appear until 1908. By that time Lincoln was better remembered for his simple origins than for the kind of grandiose final passing that Chappel had invented for him. Like no other artist before him, Alonzo Chappel

stretched the "rubber room" into unrecognizable dimensions. He clearly believed in his elaborate project, but the public was simply not buying.

THE APRIL 29, 1865, issue of *Harper's Weekly* was the first periodical to feature advertisements for pictorial products inspired by the assassination. For the next 12 weeks, its pages were filled with offerings for medals, mourning badges, and, of course, prints. By July 22, such advertisements had disappeared. After only three months, the vogue for assassination, deathbed, and funeral prints had gone as quickly as it had come. By the time retrospective painters like Ritchie and Chappel produced their heroic canvases, public interest in such depictions had completely faded.

Even if most pictorial representations of Lincoln's death lacked realism and good draftsmanship, all of them—paintings, popular prints, and photo montages—deserve renewed appreciation today because of their staggering popularity at the time they were issued, and their decisive impact on popular culture and the collective American

memory. Artists, engravers, lithographers, and photographers produced their vast array of pictures in response to commercial demand, but their results confirmed, and may have influenced, Lincoln's status as a martyr of liberty. Through these images, contemporary Americans can understand how their nineteenth-century forebears learned about Abraham Lincoln's death and came to respond to it as the defining event of their age. ★

*Harold Holzer has authored or contributed to 11 books on Lincoln and the Civil War era. Frank J. Williams is one of the country's leading collectors of Lincoln memorabilia and currently heads The Lincoln Forum. This article was adapted from the authors' longer version, published by Thomas Publications.*



For more on Abraham Lincoln, read "Lincoln and the Chicken Bone Case," by Charles M. Hubbard. You can find it starting June 29 on the World Wide Web at TheHistoryNet, <http://www.thehistorynet.com>.

# THOMPSON'S Cigar Hall of Fame<sup>sm</sup>

**When In Doubt, Follow The Leaders**

The distinguished world-class three-  
some pictured here have as much as 140  
years of success behind them and are still  
the first choice of cigar smokers the world  
over who insist upon a first-class smoke.

Each is made of meticulously hand-  
selected premium long-filler tobaccos careful-  
ly aged by the centuries-old Cuban method.  
Each enjoys an enviable reputation for mild-  
ness and flavor earned by years of consistent-  
ly living up to, and even exceeding, the special  
expectations of more particular and more  
knowledgeable smokers, not only in this coun-  
try, but wherever good cigars are enjoyed.

"A good reputation is worth more than  
money," said Publius Cyrue, a wise old  
Roman, more than 2,000 years ago. Ask any  
smoker of these three cigars and see if they  
don't agree that the reputations of these cigars  
are right on the money.

## My Introductory Offer To New Customers

**For just \$15.00 you will receive:**

2 H. UPMANN LONSDALES • 2 HOYO EXCALIBURS #3  
2 LA AURORA ROBUSTOS • Average Retail Value \$26.00

<b>Thompson Cigar Company</b>	
P.O. Box 31274 • Tampa, FL 33633-0537 • Dept. T784	
Send me six Thompson's Cigar Hall of Fame Cigars (R05275) for \$15.00 + \$3.95 shipping. (Florida residents add 6% sales tax + appropriate county tax). ONE ORDER PER CUSTOMER	
My Name _____	
My Street Address _____ Apt. _____	
City _____ State _____ Zip _____	
Daytime Phone # _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$18.95 Enclosed. Charge to my <input type="checkbox"/> VISA <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard <input type="checkbox"/> AmExpress <input type="checkbox"/> Discover	
Signed _____	
Credit Card No. (Print All Digits) _____	Exp. Date _____
<b>1-800-246-8221</b>	
Dept. T784 Fax: 813-882-4605	

OFFER EXPIRES 9/30/98 • OFFER NOT AVAILABLE TO MINORS • OFFER GOOD ONLY IN THE USA



© 1997, Thompson & Co., Inc.







